Rev. John L. Bowman

With the compliments of Mrs. M. B. Porter.

# THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

## A MEMORIAL SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

## REV. DAVID H. PORTER, D. D.,

AND PREACHED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SAVANNAH, GA., FEB. 8th, 1874.

BY THE

REV. JOHN L. GIRARDEAU, D. D.,

OF CHARLESTON, S. C.

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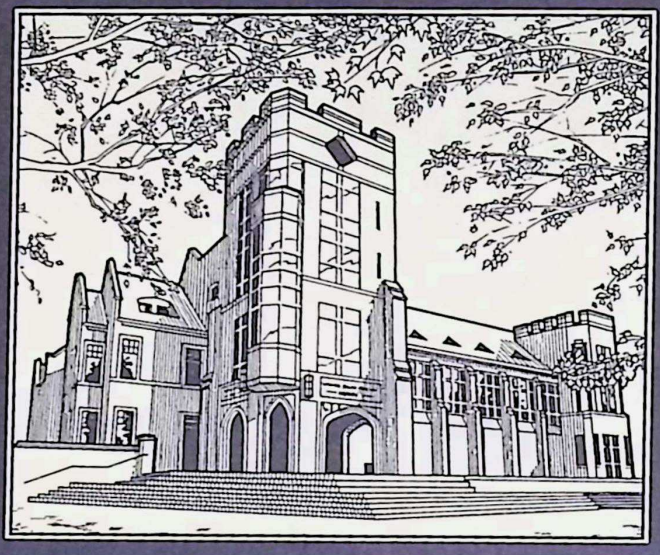

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# SERMON.

Psalms cxii. 6: "THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE IN EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE."

Upon receiving your invitation, my brethren, to preach a sermon commemorative of your beloved pastor, recently deceased, it was my purpose to prepare a discourse upon the relations and functions of the gospel minister as an ambassador of Christ, and append to it a condensed sketch of Dr. PORTER'S life, labours, and character. But the interest grew upon me in the development of the materials in hand touching his life and death, and led to a fulness of the memorial sketch which made it impossible to compass its delivery, in addition to that of a sermon proper, within reasonable limits. As it is, a draft will be made upon your attention, in excuse for which I may venture to plead our common affection for the dead.

I will, therefore, introduce what may be said in relation to your departed pastor, by only a few remarks suggested by the words of the text: "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." There are two interpretations of these words. The first is that which is expressed in the rendering of our English version; and it is conceded to be grammatical and to furnish a good sense. It understands the language to declare the fact that the righteous shall be remembered forever—that their memory shall never be allowed, like that of the wicked, to perish. The second, which has been adopted by many modern commentators, takes the meaning of the words to be, that as long as the righteous shall be remembered, they shall be remembered as righteous men. These interpretations substantially coincide. The first does not assert, that there is any other ground for the perpetuity of the memory of the righteous but their righteousness; and the second does not convey the impression, that there will ever come a period when the righteous may cease to be remembered. We may, therefore, safely interpret the words to mean, that righteousness is a reason for the everlasting remem-

brance of those who possessed it. Solomon tells us that "the memory of the just is blessed," and an uninspired poet has beautifully said,

> ——"the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

There is an instinctive sentiment, which leads men to endeavour to prevent the essence of a virtuous, useful and honourable life from wholly evaporating at death—to rescue its influence and memory from sinking with the decaying body into the silence and oblivion of the grave. That instinct Christianity recognizes and sanctifies. Jesus, the purest exponent of human virtue, the incarnate embodiment of holiness and philanthropy, the rarest and noblest "flower of humanity," having finished His glorious work of righteousness in this world, will be held in everlasting remembrance by God and angels, by the Church militant on earth and glorified in heaven. And all His true followers, according to their respective grades of fidelity, will share with Him the crown of a holy and useful life. Upon the head of each of them will rest the amaranth of eternal remembrance and unfading glory. While the Church attempts no impious apotheosis of her dead, and sublimates the life of no sinful man into that of a god; while she makes no vain effort by pompous canonizations and monumental piles to perpetuate the memory of her worthies, she is impelled by every noble sentiment, and has the warrant of Scripture, to hold them in everlasting remembrance. To this end, it is proper to collect the memorials of the departed servants of Christ, and to present them for the contemplation of His people; not so much to elicit encomiums upon them—though to praise them *as righteous* is to praise them as God has made them to be—but chiefly to magnify Divine Grace, to contribute material to the history of the Church, and to encourage those who come after to "follow them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Such is the purport of the memorial record to which your attention is now invited.

Dr. David H. Porter drew the first breath of this mortal life in the city of Selma, Alabama, on the 13th of May, 1830. His father was the Rev. Francis H. Porter, who was recognized by

his contemporaries as "an able preacher and an experienced and successful instructor of youth, and who died in 1845, leaving a widow and seven children." It is a remarkable circumstance that four of his sons devoted themselves to the ministry of the Gospel in connection with the Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Dr. Abner A. Porter—the eldest of this brotherhood of preachers—was one of the ablest ministers of the Southern Presbyterian Church. He was an accurate theologian, a vigorous writer, a powerful controversialist, and an eloquent proclaimer of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Death closed his useful and distinguished career a little more than a year ago, in the city of Austin, Texas, to which important post of our Western territory he had been, as a representative man, urged to repair by the Sustentation Committee of the General Assembly. The tidings of his departure fell upon the Church he loved, like the tolling of an alarm at midnight, and scarcely yet are the tears dried which she wept at the grave of her gifted son.

The Rev. Rufus K. Porter finished an earnest and efficient ministry in 1869, as the pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church, in the city of Atlanta. Devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

The Rev. Joseph D. Porter is still living, and a classmate and friend will be indulged in expressing his profound sympathy for him, while he lays this his humble chaplet of cypress upon the last resting-place of his youngest brother.

The early life of him whose departure from the scene of earthly labour we this day lament, was one, according to his own account of it, of bodily frailty and suffering. In a fragmentary diary which he has left, he says: "My early boyhood was marred to some extent by a period, a long period of physical feebleness and delicacy. Many days and more nights passed over my head in which I was fretful and restless through bodily pain. Oh, how often has my fond mother (God bless her loving heart!)—how often has she sat the whole night through with my head pillowed upon her bosom, gently stroking my throbbing brow, and speaking words of affection to my chafing spirit!" His imagination, and a sensibility which seemed to be allied to poetic genius, ap-

peared to have had at that time a tinge of melancholy, which, added to his physical sufferings, cast a shade of sadness over his rising morning, which even the tender ministries of home could not avail to efface.

I have not been able to find any record of his first religious experiences, or of the circumstances attending his profession of faith in Christ. I can only state, that his father's death was instrumental in leading him to seek the Saviour, and that he connected himself with the Church at 15 years of age. In 1849, he entered the Sophomore class of the South Carolina College, the professorships of which were then graced by the splendid names of William C. Preston, Robert Henry and James H. Thornwell. There is a statement among his papers, that in 1849 he was the only professor of religion in his class; but though his religious position was thus singular, he won the respect of his fellow-collegians for correctness and consistency of life. The ordeal was severe and the critics sharp, but his college-career, through grace, was without a stain. He was graduated, with the second honour of his class, in December, 1852. Immediately afterwards he commenced his studies with direct reference to the ministry, at the Theological Seminary, at Columbia, S. C.; and was matriculated a student in that institution, January 6th, 1853. It will be a matter of interest to those who enjoyed his subsequent ministrations, and confided in him as a spiritual guide, to know that he did not lightly take this step. His own statement is, that he would gladly have shrunk from incurring the solemn responsibilities of an ambassador of the Cross, could he have done so consistently with his convictions of duty. He struggled to free himself from the yoke of the Divine vocation, and pleaded to be allowed to serve his Master in the line of a secular profession. But the call of God sounded loudly in the depths of his consciousness, and conscience gave him no rest until he had decided to comply with the inward motions of the Spirit; and then he became peaceful and happy. I may be permitted to make a few extracts from his diary, as indicating his feelings upon entering on his preparation for the ministry, and also the tone of his piety during the period of its prosecution. "Here I am—a student in

the Seminary—preparing to take upon myself the vows, the sacred vows of an ambassador of Christ! Ah, who is sufficient for these things? Be Thou, O Lord, my strength and support! Oh, give me Thy Spirit! Oh, make me more devoted, self-denying, faithful and holy! My soul sickens, my spirit faints, when I look forward to a life of toil, danger and distress, a life of self-denial and suffering; but Thou, O Lord, art a sure Rock of defence. Thou art the hope of my soul and my exceeding great reward. With Thy blessing, cheerfully I will take up my cross, and follow Thee through evil as well as good report. Oh, make me the humble instrument of promoting, in however small a degree, Thy glory, and of doing good to my fellow-man. Give me only, O Lord, Thy favour which is life, and Thy loving-kindness which is so much better than life, and joyfully I will suffer and do all Thy holy will. To Thee, O God, and to Thy service I make a full and complete surrender of all I have, of all I am, and all I ever expect or hope to be. Oh, help me to make a full and complete dedication of all my powers, energies, time and talents to Thee and Thy service; and wilt Thou graciously accept the humble offering through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever!"

The following words, penned during his Seminary life, will serve to evince his experimental acquaintance with the evils of our poor sinful nature, and his sense of indebtedness to Divine Grace. "Oh, how much am I indebted to the abounding grace of God! Bad enough I am now, but what would I have been without that grace? All men are by nature depraved and sinful; their thoughts are evil and that continually; but I have sometimes thought that I was worse than anybody else. And surely, when I look back over my past life, and then look down into my heart, even as it is now—a sink of sin, a fountain of corruption—O my God, how I would hide myself in the dust! But blessed be Thy name, there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared! Jesus has died, and His blood can make the foulest clean. I come, O Lord, to that never-failing fountain. I come just as I am, full of sin, unworthy of Thy notice,

and ask Thee in faith that His blood may cleanse my guilty soul!"

One other extract, written near the close of his preparatory career, is added, not only because it discloses his own feelings but also in order that he being dead may yet speak, in his own striking and beautiful words, to those who may be walking in darkness or stricken with grief. "If we would wear the crown of glory which Jesus now wears, we must first feel the crown of thorns which He felt; if we would sit down with Him upon His Father's throne, we must hang upon the cross where He hung. He now dwells at God's right hand in the heaven of heavens, where unclouded glory forever streams; but He once mourned the hidings of the Father's face in accents of anguish such as never burst from mortal lips: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' The Apostle tells us, that 'if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him.' Then, cheer thee up, sad heart! The morning dawneth; and though dark clouds may now envelop thee, yet the time is coming when thou shalt 'arise and shine, thy light being come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon thee.' 'He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.' Oh, what a blessed thought—that He is a loving Father, and though to us His face may seem to wear a frown, yet He is the same loving Father still! He will, in His own good time, reveal Himself to the fainting heart, as a tender Parent, and we shall then be able to see that these hours of spiritual gloom were designed for our good. One word from Him will dispel all this gloom. That word He will assuredly speak sooner or later; and then these doubts and fears, which now hover around us like evil spirits, will take their flight—these sorrows, which are encamped like enemies round about us, will

> 'Fold up their tents like Arabs,
> And silently steal away.'"

This delineation, by his own hand, of the exercises of his soul while he was in the stage of preparation for the ministry, is very interesting, as evincing the fact that he was no intruder into the sacred office; but that, while he would fain have recoiled from assuming its awful functions, he felt himself urged to the re-

sponsible step by the direct, inward call of the Holy Ghost—a call which was afterwards outwardly confirmed to him by the concurring judgment of the Presbytery and of the people of God. It must, moreover, afford deep satisfaction to those who waited upon his ministry, to know that those vital truths of Redemption—the corrupt and ruined estate of man by nature, justification through faith alone in the atoning blood and righteousness of Christ, and sanctification by the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit, were not merely matters of intellectual assent to him, but were impressed in illuminated characters upon the inner tablets of his heart—were incorporated by a living process in the organism of his renewed soul. It must be refreshing to those who confided in his teachings, to learn, from records which he did not write for the public eye, that the joint testimony of the three great witnesses—the Spirit, the Water and the Blood—was echoed in the profoundest depths of his own experience. Already, too, was he walking hand in hand with the three Divine sisters—Faith, Hope and Charity, who afterwards never ceased to accompany him, and to go with him to God's altar and minister with him there.

We would fain linger at the side of the young student whose foot presses the threshold of the sanctuary, and farther interrogate his experience, but time requires us to hasten in signalising the salient points of his future history. And this must be done rapidly, as from this point there is no such record of his views and feelings as that which has furnished us an insight into his heart, while he was fitting himself for the susception of the sacred work.

On the 1st of April, 1855, he was licensed to preach the Gospel of Christ by the Charleston Presbytery, at a meeting attended by such men as Doctors Leland, Howe, Thornwell, Kirkpatrick, Palmer, and Dana. His trial sermon, on that occasion, was preached on the weighty words of 1 Tim. iii. 16—"And without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness." The sermon as originally prepared is still extant among his papers. It is clear, logical and cogent, and must have furnished to his examiners the evidence that he possessed a mind of superior abilities, and

a grasp of the redemptive system which gave promise of the future unashamed workman who rightly divided the Word of truth.

On the 28th day of the following June he received a diploma of graduation from the Theological Seminary, and bidding farewell to that sacred fellowship of the school of the prophets which none who have enjoyed it remember without emotions of pleasure, he vested himself with the cloak of zeal as an ambassador for Christ, and went forth to discharge that blessed work which was his meat and drink until his dying day. It deserves to be remarked here, that he had not only enjoyed the able instructions of the Reverend Professors of the Seminary—Doctors Leland, Howe and Palmer, and the powerful pulpit ministrations of the last-named of that triumvirate, who was at the same time the Pastor of the Columbia church, but had possessed the signal advantage of attending the preaching of that extraordinary man—the Rev. Dr. James H. Thornwell, who was then the chaplain of the South Carolina College. His pulpit was to the Theological student an additional chair of Theology filled by one who had drunk of the spirit, and partook of the ability, of Calvin. Alas, that at 50 years of age, he should have descended to the tomb! Alas, that Death so soon locked up that store-house of precious, digested thought, extinguished the glowing fires of that mighty engine, and sealed with the clay of the grave that golden mouth on whose matchless utterances men were wont to hang entranced! He went down amid the convulsions of his country and the tumults of war, as some bright star sinks beneath an horizon dense with clouds and frowning with storms,—and blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they are taken away from the evil to come!—but he had left a mark deep-graven upon the minds of youthful thinkers, which they will bear through life and transmit in turn to generations yet unborn. Death cannot kill such a man. His consecrated genius cannot be smothered by the mould of the sepulchre. It will live, a burning and a shining lamp in the House of God, from which many shall light their torches, until its rays melt away into the growing dawn of a fuller glory

than has yet suffused a world of darkness and of sin. He has taken his place, as a peer, by the side of

> "The great of old,
> The dead but sceptred sovrans who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns."

It was under such influences that Dr. Porter was privileged to pursue his studies for the ministry, and his subsequent course attested the fact that they had made a salutary and lasting impression upon him.

Soon after leaving the Seminary he visited Savannah and preached for this Church. On the 27th of June, 1855, he was unanimously elected the Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church; but although he indicated his willingness to accept the call, he was prevented temporarily from taking steps looking to the constitution of the pastoral relation. He was under a prior engagement to supply the pulpit of the Presbyterian Church of Augusta in this State, for three months from the 6th of July. That term of labour having expired, the call of this Church for his services was placed in his hands by the Presbytery of Georgia, which met at Bryan Neck Church, November 8th, 1855, and he signified his acceptance of it. The Presbytery, thereupon, took steps to ordain him to the Gospel Ministry, and to constitute the pastoral relation between him and this Church. The interesting services of his ordination and installation took place on Sabbath, November —, 1855, in the newly erected Lecture-Room, which at the same time was dedicated to the worship of God. The sermon on this occasion was preached by that eminent servant of Christ and true philanthropist, the Rev. Dr. Charles Colcock Jones.

Of the four Ruling Elders who signed the call to the pastorate, only one now survives. George G. Faries, Charles W. West, and the late gifted and lamented Judge Edward J. Harden—Dr. Porter's cherished friend and counsellor—preceded their beloved pastor to the eternal world.

Dr. Porter commenced his labours in this Church under happy auspices. The city extended a cordial welcome to him as a young man of admitted ability and cheering prospects, and the daily

journals commented in most favourable terms upon his initial ministrations. On entering upon his duties in this, his first and only pastoral charge, he preached an earnest and impressive sermon founded on the Saviour's words, John ix. 4—"I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." In that discourse he struck the key-note of his ministerial life, which I need not say to you, my Brethren, was, with the exception of periods of sickness, marked by labours "in season and out of season," until the bodily instrument gave way, and he lay down upon the bed of death. He began his pastoral work under two serious disadvantages—the want of a commodious church-edifice, which would attract a congregation and admit of its expansion, and a feeble bodily constitution upon which disease early commenced to make its inroads. The congregation was numerically weak when he assumed the care of it, but he was strong in faith and hope; and notwithstanding the embarrassments which he at first encountered, he continued to labour with increasing success until the country became convulsed by the throes of opening war. During the summer of 1861, he alternated with the Rev. Dr. Axson in preaching at Fort Pulaski. In the autumn of that year he was seized with a hæmorrhage, and was generously advised by his people to seek a recovery of strength in a season of rest. Upon his return, he was again attacked by the same disorder, and again his affectionate charge kindly consulted his comfort. They insisted on his taking a respite from labour for a year. Forbidden by his physician to preach, he availed himself of the liberal offer of his Church and sought a retreat at Beech Island in South Carolina, where he remained during the year 1862, and a part of 1863. But he became restive under this enforced silence, and gave vent to his strong desire to resume the delightful work of proclaiming the Gospel in the strong language: "I would rather die, than be laid aside from preaching." Giving way to this longing, he tendered his resignation of his pastoral functions with a view to labouring in the army. But once more his noble people exhibited their affection for him. No, they replied, labour in the army if you feel adequate to the duty, but we will not consent to the dis-

solution of the pastoral tie. He yielded to their wishes, and, in the Fall of 1863, became the Chaplain of the 5th Regiment of Georgia Cavalry, commanded at that time by Col. Robert H. Anderson, and subsequently by Col. Richard J. Davant, between whom and himself there sprang up an intimate and endearing friendship. His health was improved by the active life which he was compelled to lead, and he continued to serve with the army until the occurrence of the final catastrophe. This may not be the place or this the occasion, to expatiate upon the feelings with which our lamented brother, and others like him, regarded that great contest which terminated adversely to their fondest wishes and their agonizing prayers, but the issues of which, it were folly to say, are grasped by any one of this generation; it is, however, not irrelevant to the place or the occasion to remark, that through the instrumentality of the evangelistic labours of the ambassadors of Christ, a deep, powerful, wide-spread work of grace pervaded the armies of the Southern Confederacy, which is probably without a parallel in the annals of war. The great day alone will reveal how many there were, who brought to Christ through the prayers which ascended from the closet and the sanctuary, and through the preaching of the evangel of peace amidst the horrors of strife, passed from the gory fields of death to the rest unbroken by the rage of conflict and the clash of arms. In such labours our brother had the privilege and the honour to participate, and it is not extravagant to suppose that he has reaped an exceeding great reward.

In the summer of 1865—that year of disaster—he returned to Savannah, and resumed his labours among his beloved people. In common with their countrymen of the South, they were dejected in spirit and crippled in resources. Yet, it pleased God to grant the church increased prosperity in this period of calamity. The congregations grew larger. The lecture-room was found too strait to accommodate them, and the necessity was felt of taking measures to erect a church-edifice. To the attainment of this long-coveted end, pastor and people addressed themselves with new energy. A fresh and powerful stimulus was furnished to Dr. PORTER'S labours and hopes. These efforts were, through

the Divine blessing, crowned with success. The minister and his flock had the exquisite satisfaction of witnessing the completion of this beautiful house of worship, which, on the 9th of June, 1872, was dedicated to its sacred uses, the sermon on the occasion being preached by the Rev. Dr. B. M. Palmer, who had been the first pastor of the church. It was a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing; but as gladness had succeeded to mourning, so now, in the inscrutable Providence of God, the shadow of a great sorrow began to project itself beforehand upon the rising prospects of the church. Dr. PORTER'S health had been feeble during all the previous years of ministerial labour, but he had been sustained and stimulated by the hope of seeing the difficult enterprise of erecting a sanctuary issue in a happy result. When that end had been reached, and the swell of joyful emotion that attended it had subsided, a reaction succeeded, and his health began obviously to fail. He himself apprehended an early conclusion of his earthly labours, and said that he felt that his work was over, but that he could exclaim with good old Simeon: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." Nor had he begun prematurely to chant his *Nunc Dimittis*. His strength rapidly waned. Returning from the services of Sabbath morning, he would often lie prostrate on his back until the hour of evening worship would rouse him again to take the pulpit and deliver the message of the Lord. Led by the conviction that he could not adequately serve the church, he once more offered his resignation of his pastoral charge; and once more his people magnanimously declined to accept it. The Session adopted resolutions expressing the sympathy and unabated affection of his flock for him, and urged him to take another year of rest. This was beautiful—it was touching. It redeems the pastoral relation from the category of cold contracts, and elevates it to its proper place as a family tie in the house of God—sprinkled with atoning blood, baptized with the grace of the Holy Ghost, and cemented by the tender love of Jesus. Brethren and friends of this church, you dealt kindly and truly by the servant of Christ who is now dead. You had no bitter tears of self-reproach to shed

over his grave. I pray and believe that God will remember your kindness to his servant, and bless you for it.

Dr. PORTER withdrew his resignation, but did not avail himself of the opportunity to enjoy a period of rest. Possibly he felt as Arnauld, the great Port-Royalist did, when urged to cease from consuming labour: "Rest!" answered he, "I shall rest in eternity." Our brother, now consciously failing in bodily strength, preached as a man extending last counsels to his flock, and pressing last appeals to the unconverted to seek salvation in Christ.

At this time, also, the deep shadow of affliction darkened the innermost chambers of his domestic life. The affectionate partner of his bosom, the mother of his little ones, his fellow-pilgrim and fellow-helper in the painful journey to the grave, lay stricken apparently by mortal disease. With emotions which cannot be described, he watched by her to see her die. He accompanied her, as she leaned upon his feeble arm, to the bank of Jordan. But arrived there, it was not she who crossed, but he. She saw him pass over the last river, and bidding him for a while farewell, returned weeping, with her little smitten flock, along the road of life. Truly, God's ways are untraceable!

Early in November of the last year, (1873,) Dr. PORTER, though feeble, and to the eye of the friendly observer bearing the pale ensign of approaching death upon his face, attended the meeting of the Synod of Georgia which was held in Newnan. It was the last convocation of his brethren on earth in which he was destined to sit. His own great feebleness, and sickness in his family, induced him to decline urgent invitations to remain longer in the bracing climate of the middle country. The instinct of a dying man impelled him homeward. The Sabbath after his return—the second in November—having secured the services of a ministerial brother for his pulpit, he essayed to go to the church. But his strength failed him, and he took to his bed never to rise again. From that time for six weeks he lingered in pain. But though his body was suffering, his spirit was at peace. His sun was setting, but it was setting in calmness and glory. No fitful tempest swept around the closing scene. On the contrary, as though he was conscious of approaching a delightful home, a cer-

tain good nature, a playful humour, which characterized him in health, ever and anon broke forth in cheerful sallies. He expressed no concern about himself, but rested with implicit confidence upon the sure promises of his God and Saviour. He repeatedly assured his wife and children of his unwavering trust in the special, covenant Providence of God in the prospect of leaving them. In that matter, his motto was—"Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide." His dominant, his only, anxiety appeared to be for the church which he had loved so well, and served so long. But finally he said, "I am resigned to God's will touching my church. Jesus loves it more than I. I can lodge it in His hands." It was the best committal which a dying pastor could make of the flock he was soon to leave. May His dying trust be honoured; and may you, and yours, and all your interests, my brethren, be ever kept in those hands which procured salvation for us, and to which all power in heaven and earth is intrusted! They hold the reins of universal dominion, and grasp the resources of almighty grace and power.

On the night of Saturday, December 20th, he grew sensibly worse. By request, Dr. Charlton, his kind and attentive physician, communicated to him the information that he was in a dying state. The intelligence did not startle him—not a ripple passed across the calmness of his pallid brow. Having requested his friend, Mr. Crane, one of the Ruling Elders of his church, to bear his farewell to all his people, he said: "Tell them I would like to shake the hand of every one of them." His characteristic aversion to pretence strikingly evinced itself in his reply to the inquiry, whether he desired the family to be gathered about his bed. He said, "Dying scenes are unnecessary," and intimated his wish rather to see each one of his children and take his leave of each naturally, as his feelings might dictate, and his rapidly failing strength would permit.

His ruling passion asserted itself in his last illness. In his feverish slumbers he would preach aloud, as though occupying his pulpit and seeing his people before him. It was their faces, into which he had so often gazed from the sacred desk with inexpressible affection, which hovered over his bed of death and

elicited his dying love. At one time he distinctly repeated the whole of Bishop Ken's sublime and well-known doxology, beginning

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,"

and fully awaking, asked, "Why do you not sing?" The extreme exhaustion of his bodily powers caused him to say: "I am so tired! If I could only rest!" To this Mrs. Porter replied: "You will soon rest. The heavenly rest which you have so often depicted to others, you will soon know." And to this he nodded his assent.

It was most affecting to notice how, when he was near his end, the human affections which the waters of death could not quench, manifested themselves in old familiar ways, and by natural signs. By a significant gesture he invited a parting kiss from her who had been the sharer of his sorrows and his joys. When his children came one by one to his bedside to take their last look upon his dear face, he tenderly kissed each of them; but when his youngest daughter drew nigh the bed, he reached out his hand to her, and in the old hilarious tone, accosted her by the endearing diminutive by which she was called in the family circle. The little creature responded by a chuckle of delight, and climbing upon the bed nestled in her dying father's arms.

On Sabbath, the sound of the church-bells ringing for morning worship struck his ear, and he said to Mr. Way, one of the Ruling Elders, "Will there be preaching in our church to-day?" His church seemed to be still dwelling in his heart. Having assented to the offering of prayer at his bedside by his friend and brother, the Rev. Dr. Axson, he spoke no more, until he was near his last moment, when, with his eyes fixed upward, he distinctly uttered the single word, "Come!" and then turning his look upon his devoted wife, he continued to gaze steadily upon her until his last breath was drawn. And so, without a struggle or a groan, on the Lord's Day, December 21st, 1873, in the 44th year of his age, having been eighteen years a minister of the Gospel and the Pastor of this church, he ceased to suffer, to work and to live on earth, and fell asleep on the bosom of his Lord.

"How calm his rest!
Night-dews fall not so gently on the ground,
Nor weary, worn-out winds expire so soft."

His funeral services, which were held in this church, and attended by a large concourse of mourning friends, were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Axson and the Rev. Mr. King. His body was interred in Laurel Grove Cemetery in the immediate vicinity of this city. There let it sleep, delivered from pain, guarded by the sleepless vigils of the Spirit of Christ, and undisturbed by the whirl of life, the storms of revolution and "the drums and tramplings of conquests," until the eastern sky shall flush with the morning glories of the great, rising day!

The results of Dr. PORTER'S labours can only be measured by us from what appears of them to us, and then only approximately. The revelations of the final day alone will disclose the full influence of his ministry. We have reason to believe that many were led by its instrumentality to a knowledge of salvation in Christ. No limited intelligence is able to form a proper estimate of the sweep of such results. Eternal duration alone can unfold their significance, a duration in which each ransomed being will have scope in which "to develope its own separate infinity of interest"—to exert immortal energies and enjoy immortal bliss. The glorified preacher of the Gospel, surrounded by monuments so splendid of his ministry in this world, will have reason for everlasting thanksgivings to God that, in the sphere of earthly labour and instrumentality, he did not live in vain. He will then discover that he had been employed in the highest of all human offices—the salvation of deathless spirits to the glory of free and sovereign Grace.

There is, however, a result of Dr. PORTER'S labours of which we are prepared in some degree to speak, as one which is obvious to our apprehension. He was the instrument, in the hands of God, of building up this church—of perfecting its organized strength, and indoctrinating it in the knowledge of Christian truth and the appreciation of Christian duty. And he also efficiently coöperated with others in the noble enterprise of rearing an edifice in which that church can hear the Gospel, render its worship, expand its growth, and compass those various offices of love to which its Master has called it. This was an end worth living for. Its importance can scarcely be exaggerated. To se-

cure it our lamented brother devoted his energies. For this, he encountered sacrifice, poured out his prayers, and forced a body which was the home of disease to speak and act and toil. This stimulated his living labours and occupied his dying thoughts. Let him sleep on now and take his rest! His work is crowned, his hopes are fulfilled. He is dead; but this church lives on, and, by God's blessing, will live on, a permanent, vital organization, a grand Christian institute—preaching the Gospel, witnessing for the truth, gathering sinners into the fold of Christ, and training souls for glory everlasting. It will spread its protecting wing over generations following generations in their march to the grave; and may span, with its salutary ministrations, the interval which shall elapse from this time to the close of the present dispensation. What a glorious result of a life of self-denial, toil and pain is the establishment of one true church of Christ! Our brother may well have preferred it to the harvesting of the applause of the world, and the wearing of the diadem of universal empire. As we now contemplate it, we may be allowed to anticipate the plaudit which Grace will utter in the day of awards: "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

And, my brethren, permit me in all faithfulness to say, that you will hardly be insensible to the heavy responsibility which, in this relation, now rests upon you—the responsibility of developing the interests and prosecuting the work of this church in the spirit of your departed pastor, of perpetuating that sound and evangelical type of preaching which he so nobly exemplified, and of guarding with the most sedulous vigilance and care against the danger to which the best churches are exposed—of deflecting from the narrow way of adherence to the truth of the Gospel. Sooner burn this pulpit, than see it desecrated to jugglery with the Word of God and a sensational tickling of itching ears. You are guardians of trusts the most sacred for your children and their posterity.

Perhaps no apology need be rendered to you, my brethren, who loved Dr. PORTER, for the disproportionate length of the foregoing sketch of his life, relatively to the other parts of this dis-

course; but it may be proper to state that I have been induced to do this by two reasons. The first is, that it seemed to be desirable to present as full an account, as was practicable under the circumstances, of the life and labours of one who was so eminently useful and so deservedly and widely esteemed as a minister of the Gospel; and also, to furnish to those who leaned with confidence upon his spiritual guidance, a view of the dealings of the Divine Spirit with the early experience of their pastor, and the deep and conscientious feelings which led him to assume the awful responsibilities of the ministerial office. The second is, that I was more competent to prepare an historical sketch of the facts of his life, than to produce a satisfactory analysis of the qualities which distinguished him in the discharge of his official functions as a Preacher, a Pastor, and a Presbyter. The materials necessary to the performance of the former office, were, to some extent, available, as furnished by his own papers, by a personal acquaintance with him, and by the minute and accurate statements of those who knew him best; while, although he was my friend, it was not my privilege to be associated with him in the fulfilment of his public duties. I have, therefore, to rely for an estimate of him in these respects, mainly upon his general reputation, which was not confined to this city, and upon the opinions of those who were competent to form a correct and sober judgment. I trust that what may be deemed defective or inadequate may be attributed to my own imperfect knowledge.

As a Preacher, Dr. PORTER was possessed of more than ordinary gifts. His ability was marked and decided. The foundations of his scholarship were well laid, for, as we have seen, his academic course was completed with the honours of an institution which could boast of Robert Henry as its Professor of Greek; and it was his habit through life to cultivate a critical acquaintance with the original languages in which the Scriptures were written. His mind, while perhaps, not metaphysical in the highest sense, was sufficiently so to enable him to institute a thorough analysis of any subject which he handled. It was remarkably clear and logical, and as a consequence of these qualities, his argumentation was vigorous and conclusive. He had a distinct

conception of the scheme of salvation, and his sermons evince the fact that the great doctrines of grace were interwoven in the fibre of his own experience. His mind was free from extravagance, and the result was that his preaching was distinguished by judiciousness and soundness, not characterized by the special prominence of any single quality, but affording a happy combination of many attributes—leading to a due admixture of the abstract and the concrete, of the theoretical and the practical. His perception of the beautiful was quick, his taste cultivated, his imagination vivid, and at times it soared to the region of the sublime. His sermons, consequently, were devoid of dryness, and charmed the hearer by a chastened beauty of conception, and a graphic freshness of portraiture. One well able to judge, who had heard him frequently, has expressed the opinion that he was one of the best writers of sermons with whom he had been acquainted. He was not the impassioned orator; but, possessed of a graceful and attractive person, a deep and mellow voice, and an earnest and affectionate address, he preached with great impressiveness and power. But, as Bernard said, "Useful is reading, useful is learning, but much more useful is the unction which teaches concerning all things." And Dr. PORTER preached with unction. Deeply sensible of his own dependence upon Divine grace, and relying himself, as a sinner, upon the blood of Jesus, he was a son of consolation to doubting, tempted, and afflicted believers, and an urgent and pathetic proclaimer of the gracious invitations of the Gospel to those who were without Christ and therefore without God and without hope. He seemed to act on the motto of the godly and earnest Baxter:

> "I'd preach as though I ne'er should preach again,
> And as a dying man to dying men."

Our departed brother was admitted by all who knew him to be largely gifted with the tenderness of the Pastor's heart. He gently led the feeble of the flock and carried the lambs in his bosom. Frequently, when needing himself the ministry of others, he would hasten to the couch of the sick and the suffering. Affectionate in disposition and quick of sympathy, he never closed

his ear against the call of any, however humble and unknown, who desired his pastoral services. It mattered not to what fold they belonged, or that they belonged to no fold at all, their need was their conceded title to his assistance, and he hastened to afford them what relief he could. The poor and the needy found in him a friend, and none who appealed to him for the help he could give, retired with the lament, "No man careth for my soul."

His careful discharge of pastoral duty to the young was a noteworthy feature of his ministry. Recognizing the obligation of the pastor to attend to their religious training, he made it a habit regularly to visit the Sabbath-school, to encourage the efforts of the teachers in their labour of love, and to address to the children words of instruction and of affectionate counsel. My young friends, remember the words which your dear Pastor spoke to you while he was yet with you. You will see his face and hear his gentle voice no more in your school; but, trust in Jesus as your Saviour, give yourselves to His service, and you may meet him again in a better world. There the great Pastor Himself collects the sheep of His fold, and makes them to lie down in green pastures, and leads them beside the still waters.

It is conceded by his brethren, who were intimately associated with him in the courts of the Church, that Dr. PORTER was eminently qualified for the discharge of the important functions of a Presbyter. His clear and logical intellect, the vigour and ability with which he grappled with every subject which he considered, and his knowledge of constitutional law, rendered him invaluable in the deliberations of his Presbytery. At the same time, the sweetness of his temper and the Christian courtesy of his manner rescued the conflict of opinions from bitterness, and debate from asperity. He was able to distinguish between the person of a combatant and the views for which he contended, and appeared to regard the introduction of offensive personal allusions as positively detracting from the strength of argument. He was dogmatic without captiousness, firm without obstinacy, and unyielding without hate. The Presbytery of Savannah is in mourning for one who was a brother beloved in Jesus, and a con-

fessed leader in her counsels and her work. And her sister Presbyteries throughout our communion blend their lamentations with hers over a loss which cannot easily be repaired. How are the mighty falling, and the weapons of war perishing! Were it not for her faith in the unchanging love and the boundless resources of her Head, our Church might be tempted to despondency over the thickening graves of her sons. But He lives and reigns; and she cannot yield to despair so long as she carries engraven on her heart His ascending promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Our brother did not appear to be moved by an impulse to authorship. A few of his sermons have been published, and they give evidence of the high ability, the logical discriminativeness and the classical taste of the writer. His discourse commemorative of his friend, Judge Harden, is a noble production of its kind; and I have met among his papers a brief tribute to the character of Col. R. J. Davant, Sr., which is exquisitely written. His sermon on the relation of the State to Religion, published years ago, received high praise from Dr. Thornwell, in an editorial notice in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*. The best record which he has left is that made upon the renewed and living souls of those who were converted under his ministry, and trained by it for glory. It is one which the changes of time will never efface. It is stamped with immortality.

In the circle of the family, Dr. PORTER was gentle, loving, and playful; while, at the same time he trained them with great care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—never committing to other hands the parental duty of instructing his children in the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion. To that he personally and scrupulously attended. To use the words of one who knew him well—"He reared his children upon the promises of God." When in death his paternal arm was withdrawn from beneath them, he left them to repose upon the bosom of those promises. "Leave your fatherless children, and let your widows trust in me, and I will preserve them alive." In the companionship of friends he was genial, affectionate, and brotherly. His presence brought with it a charm. In the intercourse of society,

while maintaining his testimony for truth, he veiled the sharp angles of uncompromising principles with the soft and graceful mantle of charity. In his relations to other evangelical denominations than his own, he was eminently catholic. He held with a firm grasp his own distinctive and conscientious views of doctrine and church-order, but he respected the convictions of others, and loved his brethren—the people of Jesus—of every name, "with a pure heart fervently." He was ever ready to unite his supplications with theirs in common approaches to the throne of grace, and to stand side by side with them in every legitimate effort to advance the kingdom of Christ and the good of men. Nor did this noble catholicity of spirit fail to be appreciated. It was touchingly recognized at his funeral service. This—the church of his devoted love—was a Bochim—a place of weeping, but people of all evangelical denominations came to mingle their tears with those of his stricken flock over the coffin of their departed pastor, and the pulpit presented the unwonted spectacle of ministers representing widely divergent views of polity, church-order, and the sacraments, sitting together as mourners over a common loss.

In what has been said, it has not been intended to claim for our deceased brother the perfection of Christian character. He did not profess to have attained it. It would have been his greatest fault if he did. He had his defects, but no one was so sensible of them as himself. Whatever they were, they were not such as lead to arrogance, conceit, or pride. He was a truly humble man who sincerely endeavoured to bring his fellow-men, whom he fervently loved, to the same atoning blood which cleansed his guilty soul, and to the same fountain of living water which supplied to him the joy of pardon and the peace of God. The Apostle Peter was an imperfect man; so were his fellow-disciples; but the Lord Jesus upon rising from the dead sent His first message to His brethren and Peter. And the same Apostle, thus distinguished by Christ, was honoured in being moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the first great sermon of the Christian Dispensation, under which three thousand souls were converted to the faith of the Gospel. Our brother is not now before our bar. His

body reposes in the grave, which, like a mother's bosom, covers him from animadversion; and his disembodied spirit has gone to render its account at the tribunal of the eternal Judge. It is the prerogative of Inspiration, in its portraiture of human life and character, to paint the defects as well as the virtues of men; for God is immaculate in holiness and infallible in judgment. But we are neither. Ourselves are sinners; and it is meet that we blot out, with the tears of charity, the registry of infirmity which some page in each penitent life must bear.

Brethren, my mournful office is discharged. It has been a labour of love to prepare this humble memorial of a brother beloved in the Lord. I have been very reluctant to exclude, by its length, the direct treatment of some Gospel theme. But may I not be permitted to indulge the hope, that it will have the effect of a practical sermon, consolatory and profitable to your saddened hearts? If that result, through God's blessing, shall be attained, it will be to me a reason for unfeigned gratitude.

Suffer me, ere I close, to add a few exhortations which, I trust, will be enhanced by the pathetic solemnity of the occasion. It would be, brethren and friends of this church, both gratuitous and superfluous to urge you to hold your departed pastor in remembrance; but I would most earnestly exhort you to cherish the remembrance of the great, vital, saving truths which he so long and faithfully delivered to you. Not that I suspect you of a present tendency to depart from this testimony; but we all have need to watch and pray against the danger of defection from the simplicity of the Gospel. We live in times which are opposed to adherence to the uncorrupted Word of God. They hardly endure sound doctrine; but men, having itching ears, heap to themselves teachers. The pulpit, in certain quarters, is converted into a rostrum, and the house of God into a lecture-hall for the ventilation of the crotchets of man. Discussions on human rights, humanitarian hypotheses, and sensational harangues, under the sanction of great, popular names, are dethroning the pure Gospel from its place in the sanctuary. We are in danger of catching the plague. Let us resist the first tendencies to this treason to the Scriptures. Let us cling, cling tenaciously, cling with the

grasp of men whom a swift and powerful current threatens to sweep out to a stormy sea, to the pure, unadulterated Word of God. It is absolutely the only safe mooring of the church. Remember, I beseech you, the fidelity of your pastor to that Word. Perpetuate his influence; and let the genius of the Gospel which with him entered this sacred place, here find a settled and permanent abode. Keep this church in the attitude of a faithful witness for Jesus and His truth; let it shine with a clear, steady light, a beacon to allure the voyager over the tempestuous sea of life to the haven of safety and of rest.

The affecting suggestiveness of this occasion will call to your remembrance all that your departed friend so often preached in regard to the swiftly approaching realities and glories of the future. He is gone—and time is sweeping us on to the great judicial day, and to the rendezvous of being before the Judgment bar. How near the solemnities of that scene—the great white throne, the seated Judge, the assembled world, the sentences of destiny, the final separation, the meeting of pastors and flocks; and then, the rising of the Court, the dissolution of the great assembly, the march to glory, the triumphant chant, the entrance into the heavenly gates, the acclamations of angels, the enthronement of the King, the massing of the ransomed hosts, and the sea of hallelujahs rolling in thunder to the foot of Jesus' throne! Then, oh, then, we shall forget the sunderings of the ties of earth—its death-beds, its funerals and its graves; and in that ineffable communion across which the shadow of parting shall never be thrown, enter upon the blissful ages of eternity. "Glory and honour and praise and power and might and dominion and wisdom and thanksgiving be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever!"

My unconverted friends, a lover of your souls is gone. He who prayed for you, who wept over you, who pleaded with you to come to Jesus, will pray for you, and weep over you, and plead with you, no more. That true heart is still, that low, persuasive voice is hushed, those eloquent lips are sealed. His last prayer has been offered, his last sermon preached, his last invitation extended. Affecting thought! And will he never again enter

this pulpit? Will he never preach Jesus to you again? And did he die, without seeing you come to Christ? And did you appear to him in his dying thoughts as rejecters of his Saviour and your Saviour? Let me entreat you to call him now to remembrance. Let these trappings of grief remind you of him. Methinks, the echoes of his pleading voice have not yet entirely died away in this sacred place. Hark! did they speak? What do they softly, gently whisper? Is it this? Come to Jesus! The night is at hand! Come, oh, come to-day! But will ye not come? Then hearken again to them as they expire in the rumbling thunder of that word, from which he preached as the sun of his last public service was wheeling down the sky: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

# IN MEMORIAM.

## Rev. David H. Porter, D. D.

SAVANNAH, December 26th, 1873.

At a meeting of the session of the First Presbyterian church, held this evening, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Almighty God, in his inscrutable providence, has again laid his hand heavily upon us in removing our dearly beloved pastor, Rev. DAVID H. PORTER, D. D. There is no language in which to express our grief. We can only say, "Be still and know that I am God, who doeth all things well," and bow in humble submission to his will.

Dr. Porter came to us in the morning of his ministry—this being his first and only charge. He found us a feeble band struggling for existence; and he has labored on with us through many discouraging embarrassments, refusing flattering inducements to draw him away to other and more inviting fields; and of late years, in feebleness of health, sustained only by an abiding Christian faith that found him at the post of duty when his feeble body seemed ready to sink under the burthen of the spirit.

When Dr. Porter came to us, he found us just ready to remove from our old house of worship to the lecture-room of this church; and the dedication of that room with the ordination and installation of our pastor was one service.

He continued to labor there until we were able to rear our present beautiful house of worship. That being accomplished, his health began perceptibly to grow more feeble; and a sense of duty to the church, disregarding self and a dependent family, induced him to tender his resignation, which the session refused to consider for one moment, and begged him instantly to withdraw it, which he did.

No pastor has ever more entirely and universally won the affectionate love of a people than has Dr. Porter, not only of his own church and congregation, but the whole community. If he had a living enemy, we know not where to look for him.

Many and many a time has he risen from a bed of sickness, when his feeble body was barely able to sustain him, to respond to calls to the bedside of the sick and the dying, and as readily out of his own congregation as in it; no matter where, it was his Master's work, and his heart was in it, and ever ready for it.

No man has ever gone down to the grave from this community in whose Christian character there was more entire confidence, and whose death will be more generally lamented.

In view of this afflictive dispensation, be it

*Resolved*, 1 That in the death of our beloved pastor we have lost a faithful, earnest Christian teacher and friend, who has "fought the good fight and finished his course, and there is therefore laid up for him a crown of righteousness," unto which, we are confident, he has attained.

2 That we tender to the widow and orphans of our beloved pastor, our most heartfelt and cordial sympathy in their deep affliction, and that we hereby pledge ourselves to sustain and comfort them, both spiritually and temporally, to the utmost of our ability, God helping us, in which we are confident the entire church and congregation unite.

3. That a blank page of our session book be inscribed with the name of our beloved pastor, the date of the commencement and close of his ministry; and that this action be placed upon record, and official copies be furnished the family, our city papers, and the religious papers of the Church.

Extract from the Minutes.

J. E. WAY, Clerk of the Session.